

**WE CLAIM:**

1. A system for matching entities having needs to entities having capability to meet the needs, the system comprising:

5 a plurality of needs profiles, wherein each need profile comprises a data record specifying attributes about a need;

10 a plurality of capability profiles, wherein each capability profile comprises a data record specifying set of attributes of an entity having a capability of meeting a need; and

15 a matching engine coupled to repetitively and automatically examine the needs profiles and capability profiles to identify matched profiles, wherein a match comprises a set of profiles judged to be substantially compatible based upon correspondence of the attributes specified therein.

2. The system of claim 1 further comprising a notification message generated to first and second users associated with a matched profile.

3. The system of claim 2 wherein the notification message includes a selected subset of attributes from the matched profile(s).

4. The system of claim 3 further comprising:

a response message generated by a recipient of a notification message; and

5 a detailed notification message generated to the users associated with the matched profiles in response to receiving response messages both users associated with a particular matched profile.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the each need profile specifies attributes that describe a human

resources need and each capability profile comprises attributes that describe skills of a job candidate.

6. The system of claim 5 wherein the job candidate attributes include attributes describing the associated candidate's qualifications.

7. The system of claim 5 wherein the job candidate attributes describe the associated candidate's desire to use particular skills in a future employment.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein the needs profile data record is persistent.

9. The system of claim 1 wherein the capability profile data record is persistent.

10. The system of claim 1 wherein each need profile is associated with an entity and is generated by the associated entity without knowledge of any capability profile.

11. The system of claim 1 wherein each capability profile is associated with an entity and is generated by the associated entity without knowledge of any need profile.

12. A job applicant agent comprising:  
a user interface for gathering information from a job applicant;

5 a data record generated from the gathered information, the data record comprising a plurality of attributes describing skills of an associated job applicant, the data record being formatted for use in and continuously accessible by an external matching engine;  
and

10        a network interface configured to communicate the data record to the external matching engine.

13. The applicant agent of claim 12 wherein the data record is formatted to enable the external matching engine to readily detect matches between the described skills and required skills of a hiring agent data record 5 accessible by the matching engine.

14. The applicant agent of claim 12 wherein the data record further comprises attributes describing the associated job applicant's desire to utilize specified skills in future job assignments.

15. An automated hiring agent comprising:  
a user interface for gathering information from a human hiring agent;  
a data record generated from the gathered 5 information, the data record comprising a plurality of attributes describing skills required by an associated job, the data record being formatted for use in and continuously accessible by an external matching engine; and

10        a network interface configured to communicate the data record to the external matching engine.

16. The hiring agent of claim 13 wherein the data record is formatted to enable the external matching engine to readily detect matches between the required skills and described skills of a job applicant agent data 5 record accessible by the matching engine.

17. The hiring agent of claim 13 further comprising a template data record, the template data record comprising predefined attributes describing the skills required by the associated job, wherein the user

5 interface is populated with information from the template data record before gathering information from the human hiring agent.

18. A matching engine for matching attributes specified by a plurality of hiring agents with attributes specified by a plurality of job applicant agents, the matching engine comprising:

5 a database storing a plurality of hiring agents and a plurality of job applicant agents;

a mechanism for continuously comparing profiles in the database to identify matches between hiring agents and job applicant agents.

19. The matching engine of claim 18 further comprising a notification mechanism responsive to identification of a match for notifying users associated with agents associated with a match.

20. The matching engine of claim 18 further comprising:

an interface receiving job applicant agent profiles;  
an interface receiving hiring agent profiles;

5 wherein the mechanism for continuously comparing profiles is invoked in response to receiving a new profile,.

21. A method for incrementally revealing information in a profile matching system comprising:

providing a plurality of profiles, each profile associated with a user and each profile comprising a set 5 of attributes describing the associated user;

at least one restricted information section within a profile such that the profile can be accessed while the restricted information remains protected;

automatically matching profiles based on  
10 correspondence of attributes specified in the profiles,  
including attributes within the restricted section;

presenting automatically matched profiles to users  
associated with the profile in a manner that prevents  
exposing the restricted information section;

15 enabling each user that is presented with a matched  
profile to indicate further interest; and

responsive to receiving indication of further  
interest from all users associated with a matched  
profile, presenting detailed information including the  
20 restricted information section.

22. A state machine for use in an human resources  
matching engine, the state machine comprising:

an unmatched state;

5 an automatched state reached from the unmatched  
state upon detection of a substantial correspondence  
between a first stored profile and a second stored  
profile;

10 a first interested state reached from the  
automatched state upon indication that a user associated  
with the first stored profile is interested in pursuing a  
relationship with a user associated with the second  
stored profile;

15 a second interested state reached from the  
automatched state upon indication that a user associated  
with the second stored profile is interested in pursuing  
a relationship with a user associated with the second  
stored profile;

20 a not interested state reached from the automatched  
state upon indication that either the user associated  
with the first stored profile or the user associated with  
the second stored profile is not interested in pursuing a  
relationship with the other user; and

an evaluating state reached from the first interested state upon indication that a user associated with the second stored profile is interested in pursuing a relationship with a user associated with the second stored profile or upon indication that a user associated with the first stored profile is interested in pursuing a relationship with a user associated with the second stored profile.

23. A method for matching job applicants with hiring agents, the method comprising the acts of:

generating a plurality of needs profiles, wherein each needs profile comprises attributes about a need associated with a particular hiring agent

storing the needs profiles as a data record;

generating a plurality of capability profiles, wherein each capability profile attributes of a job applicant;

10 storing the capabilities profiles as a data record; and

repetitively and automatically matching the needs profiles and capability profiles to identify matched profiles, wherein a match comprises a set of profiles judged to be substantially compatible based upon correspondence of the attributes specified therein.

24. The method of claim 23 further notifying first and second users associated with a matched profile in identifying a matched profile.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the act of notifying comprising presenting a selected subset of attributes from the matched profile to users associated with the matched profile.

26. The method of claim 25 further comprising:  
responding to the notification with an indication of  
further interest in the identified match; and  
generating a detailed notification message to the  
5 users associated with the matched profiles in response to  
receiving response messages from both users associated  
with a particular matched profile.

27. The method of claim 23 wherein the act of  
generating a capability profile comprises including  
attributes within the capability profile that describe  
the associated user's desire to apply particular skills  
5 in a future employment.

28. A signal-bearing medium tangibly embodying a  
program of machine-readable instructions executable by a  
digital processing apparatus to perform a method for job  
applicants with hiring agents, the method comprising:  
5 generating a plurality of needs profiles, wherein  
each needs profile comprises attributes about a need  
associated with a particular hiring agent;  
storing the needs profiles as a data record;  
generating a plurality of capability profiles,  
10 wherein each capability profile attributes of a job  
applicant;  
storing the capabilities profiles as a data record;  
and  
repetitively and automatically matching the needs  
15 profiles and capability profiles to identify matched  
profiles, wherein a match comprises a set of profiles  
judged to be substantially compatible based upon  
correspondence of the attributes specified therein.